

"Listen to Your Momma" and Get Vaccinated Against the Flu DHMH Kicks off Flu Vaccination Media Campaign during National Influenza Vaccination Week

Your doctor, pharmacy and local health department have the vaccine

Lt. Governor's Office News Release

BALTIMORE, MD (December 8, 2010) - Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) leaders joined with Baltimore County Health Dept. officials to kick-off a TV/Radio and outdoor media campaign reminding everyone over the age of six months to get vaccinated against the flu. While health care providers and local pharmacies have had the vaccine in adequate supply since September, local health departments throughout Maryland are making the seasonal flu vaccine available for free or a minimal fee.

"Vaccination is the safest, most effective way to protect yourself and your family against flu," said John M. Colmers, DHMH Secretary. "This campaign addresses those flimsy excuses people tell themselves to avoid getting protected. You can't catch the flu from the vaccine. You will give yourself the best chance of preventing time away from work or school by getting vaccinated now, before we reach the peak of flu season."

The media campaign kick-off coincides with National Influenza Vaccination Week and the efforts of many local health departments to make the seasonal flu vaccine available for free or at low cost to anyone above the age of six months. This year's seasonal flu vaccine will protect you against the H1N1, A and B strains of the flu virus, all of which have been detected in Maryland this flu season. While hospitalizations and doctor visits associated with influenza remain low, Maryland has been trending upward in flu activity indicators for the last three weeks.

"While H1N1 remains a threat to all unvaccinated Marylanders, this year we expect to see a return of regular seasonal flu which can also carry serious consequences. Fortunately, this year's vaccine is combined and protects against both H1N1 and seasonal flu," said Frances Phillips, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. "Remember, we protect more than just ourselves when we get vaccinated. We also protect our families, friends, co-workers and those who are more vulnerable to serious flu-related health consequences."

"I am urging Marylanders to stay in the game and get a flu shot now," said Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch, Health Officer and Director of the Baltimore County Department of Health. "When it comes to getting vaccinated, it is always too soon to quit and never too late to start."

Individuals who have increased risk for complications from the flu include people over the age of 65, pregnant women and anyone with certain chronic medical conditions including asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney and liver disorders, neurological disorders, blood disorders, morbid obesity, HIV or AIDS, and cancer.

Find out more about seasonal flu vaccination clinics in your area by checking with your Local Health Department. For contact information, visit DHMH Flu Website Get Vaccinated (<http://spdev.dhmh.md.gov:21115/flumd/SitePages/Home.aspx>). For general Flu information, visit DHMH Flu .

For more information about the seriousness of influenza and the benefits of vaccination, talk to your doctor or nurse, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sites www.cdc.gov or Seasonal Flu Vaccine or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.